Bradley Farm Trail

Mount Greylock State Reservation

SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

Rugged Mountainside Farms

Between 1765-1865 the slopes of Mount Greylock were farmed more than anytime before or since, home to no fewer than 42 farms. Place names across the mountain recall these previous farmers: Rounds, Northrup, Jones and Wilbur. The forested slopes of today obscure the cellar holes and once vibrant lives of these pioneering folk.

Early settlers to this area had an ordeal ahead of them clearing and improving their land. In many cases they carved out a subsistence living on “100 odd acres more or less.” Remnants of stonewalls, cleared while plowing, remain today as evidence of previous use of the land. Stonewall fences often separated orchards of apple and pear trees from fields of grain, corn, potatoes, peas, beans, pumpkins, hops, hemp, turnips and hayfields. Where the rocky soil was tough to farm and pasturing of livestock animals was more common. Pigs and cows were fattened for market, sheep raised for wool.

With poor dirt roads these farming families were often isolated from the “bottom dwellers” in the valley, learning to be self-sufficient. Yet they often had close ties to neighboring mountain farms, critical to surviving harsh winters; they bartered and traded goods and sometimes land with each other.

The Bradley Farm

The Visitors Center and surrounding parkland were once part of the Bradley Family farm. William Bradley *(1730 –1809)* a native of Connecticut, was a prominent founder of the town of Lanesborough, acquiring this land about 1762. The land transferred to his son, Capt. Ephraim Bradley *(1752-1824)*, in 1787. Ephraim continued to expand the farm by buying up smaller farms until he had 300 acres by 1800. Although closer to the valley, he probably had many business dealings with farmers further up “Saddle Mountain.”

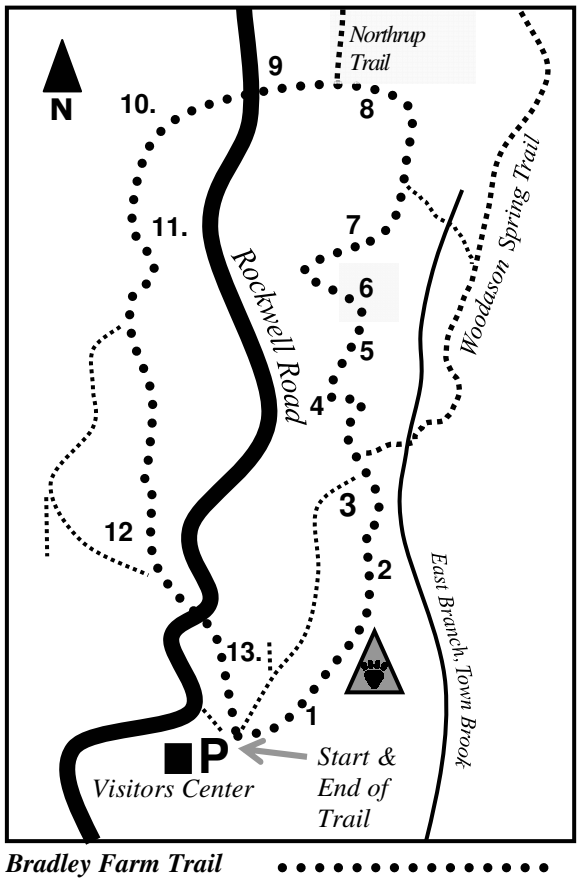
It often took two generations to clear land for plowing crops: first to clear the trees, second to remove the stones. By looking at the amount of rocks still scattered in this area between stonewalls, it appears Ephraim most probably had cleared the trees and used these upland slopes as pasture for livestock. He used the more arable land closer to the valley for his crops.

About the Trail

Beginning and ending at the northeast corner of the Visitors Center parking lot, the Bradley Farm Trail is relatively **easy** for hiking and cross-country skiing (see map). Total length is **1.8 miles, round-trip**. Plan on spending about **90 minutes** if hiking at a moderate pace.

- Please stay on designated trails.
- Leave only footprints take only pictures.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.
- **For foot and ski traffic only.**

Follow the blue bear paw blazes.



Bradley Farm Trail

1) Ancient Orchard

Notice the stunted scraggly trees around you? These are remnants of Ephraim Bradley's apple orchard from the early 1800s. Ephraim is now long gone, but the trees remain and animals now tend to his crop of sweet fruit.

The brightly colored, sweet smelling flowers attract pollinating insects to them year after year. Once pollinated, the flower's ovary grows into a small green ball. Over the summer months it matures, and by September it's a ripened apple.

Apples lure wildlife, such as deer. The animals in turn spread the seeds in their droppings. This process happens annually and the orchard continues to grow!

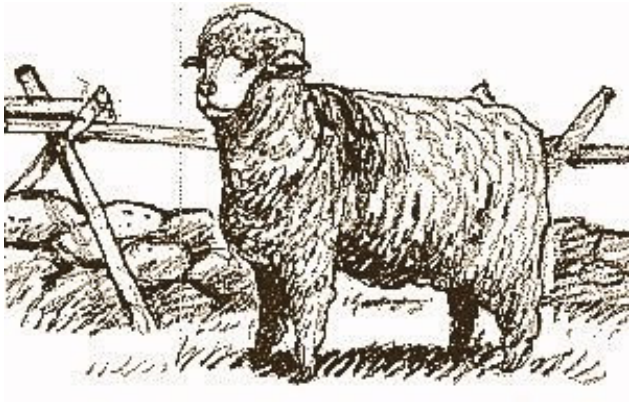
2) Deepening Valleys

Over a period of hundreds to thousands of years water has deepened this ravine, carrying soil and pebbles along with it, carving it even deeper. Vegetation slows erosion by holding on to the soil with its roots.

Watersheds are geographic basins that collect and funnel water. This brook located is within the Housatonic River watershed. Water not absorbed by the ground flows into the Housatonic River, which eventually travels to Long Island Sound, almost 130 miles away!

3) Labor of Love

This stonewall is a remnant of Ephraim Bradley's farm, built with rocks that turned up while plowing fields, Bradley and his family created this wall most likely to mark the edge of a field or as a property boundary.



Spanish Merino Sheep

Stonewalls were also used for containing livestock. Between c.1807-1870 the land probably pastured huge flocks of Spanish Merino sheep, important to the Berkshire region's industrial wool manufactories. As the local agricultural economy shifted and declined after the Civil War period, open fields had again returned to forests by the early 1900s.

4) Once Beauty, Now Beast

This old maple tree was mature when this was open farmland over 130 years ago. Its once magnificent crown of branches now lies rotting on the forest floor. Organisms of decay are beginning to recycle this tree even before it's completely dead, creating soil for new growth in the forest.

5) Forest Intersection

Look right, now left. See a difference? To the right is an ***Eastern Hemlock forest*** stand. Beneath its dense canopy little light reaches the ground; not much undergrowth can survive here. Young hemlocks find light to grow and compete well with other hemlocks. Notice how it feels cooler in the shade of this forest.

To the left is a ***northern hardwood forest***. Light is able to get through to the under-story here allowing a diversity of plant life the opportunity to grow.

6) Trees Company

Here's a sensory activity you can touch! Trees grouped here are Sugar Maple, Black Cherry and White Ash. Can you tell the difference by looking? How about by touching the bark? White Ash has uniform ridges and deep diamond shaped furrows. It feels like cork. Black Cherry is like giant cornflakes; and Sugar Maple has narrow scaly ridges and is hard. Examine the different leaves too.

Competition for space between trees often affects their growth. What could have allowed these mature trees to grow so large, so close together?

7) Rock Hard

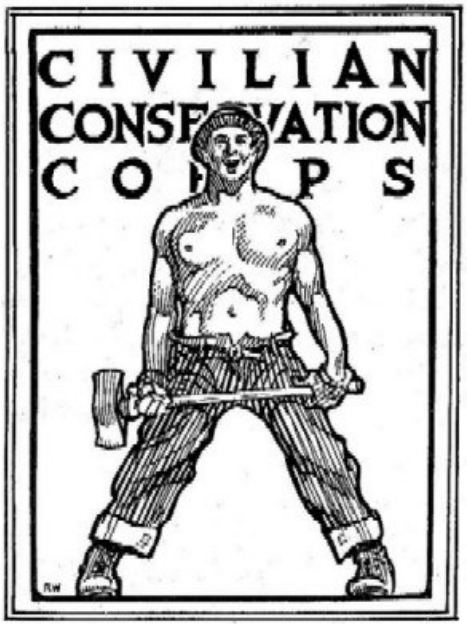
One of the oldest rocks that crops up in the Greylock massif is ***quartzite***. It's an opaque, white colored rock. Originally formed from sand, quartzite can be found around the mountain as whole rocks or as streaks through other rock types. Here it is imbedded within grey-colored ***schist***, a metamorphic remnant of the ancient muddy seabed that existed here over 500 million years ago that now makes up most of the mountain. Can you find other examples along the trail?

8) Just a Youngin'

Here the forest is reclaiming old open farmland. This is the first stage of forest succession. Wildlife is abundant here because food is easy to find. Thick groundcover provides hiding places from predators.

Pioneer trees, birches, beech, maples, and White Pine have little competition, allowing them to spread out their crowns. As this young forest matures competition among trees will increase, restricting growth and reducing groundcover.

9) Pinecone Johnnies



Soon cross Rockwell Road, originally built in 1906-07 by the Berkshire County's Greylock (Reservation) Commission as an auto road to the summit. During the Great Depression in the 1930s it was greatly improved by the Civilian Conservation Corps, part of a federal program to improve parklands across the nation. The CCC 107th Company camp was located at the present day campground on Sperry Road from 1933-40. The CCC developed many of the recreation facilities still in use today at Mount Greylock, in addition to the roadway, including Bascom Lodge, the expert class Thunderbolt (Ski) Trail and Thunderbolt Shelter.

You've probably heard the saying, *"another day, another dollar,"* which originated from the CCC. An enrollee earned $30 a month, most of which went home to help support their family through the difficult economic times.

10) Black Death

To your right are two large Black Cherry trees infected with a disease known as ***Black Knot***, common to cherry species in North America. A fungus that infects young, succulent twigs spreads Black Knot disease. The fungal spores are produced on living galls one to several years old spreading over time to new parts of the tree. If untreated, Black Knot will eventually kill the tree.

11) Lightning Strikes!

A nearby Black Cherry tree bears the scars of an unfortunate encounter with lightning. The electrical current followed the trunk of the tree and eventually made its way in to the root system. Observing where the bark has been blown off you can see the lightning's route.

12) Evergreens of the Forest Floor

Notice the patches of moss-like plants on the ground. Ground Pine or Running Pine and other clubmosses. Although the name and appearance refers to "pine," these plants aren't trees or even true mosses, they're actually related to ferns. Clubmosses have a woody stem that transports water, which mosses lack. In the age of the dinosaurs these plants once grew as large as trees. Clubmosses act as a carpet for the forest floor, holding in moisture in the soil for other plants to thrive on.

13) Forest Health

You are standing in the middle of a ***Continuous Forest Inventory*** (CFI) plot. All trees within a 105 foot diameter are marked and given a number. Every 5 to 10 years state foresters visit the plot and record the species' size, new significant-sized trees, diseases of the marked trees. This data allows foresters and scientists to determine the health of the forest and how to best manage it in the future.

A forester surveys a CFI plot.

This brings us to the end of the trail at the Visitor Center parking lot. We hope you enjoyed this self-guided tour.

The Bradley Farm Trail and interpretive brochure were created in 2002 by Student Conservation Association interns Brian Bodah and Victoria Estok. Thanks to Mr. Mike Whalen of Lanesborough, MA for all of his generous help with the project. This project was funded through a grant from the Fields Pond Foundation, administered by the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) sponsors the Student Conservation Association Mass Parks AmeriCorps. For more program information contact SCA at: (413) 339-6631.

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